

CERTAIN
QUERIES

Concerning the Receiving of the

~~112.111~~
Sacrament.

Preached in a

SERMON

ON

Saint Luk. 9. Vers. 30, 31.

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the City of Bristol.

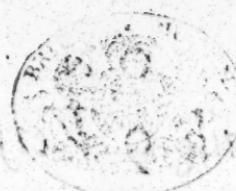
LONDON:

Printed for Charles Allen, Bookseller
in Bristol, 1680.

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CERTAIN
QUERIES
 Concerning the Receiving of the
SACRAMENT.



HE Lord Jesus Christ was Transfigured on the Holy Mount, in the presence of Saint Peter, James, and John, who were eye-witnesses of his Glory: *For behold, there*

talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. By which passage it is manifest, that among all the Sub-

jects in the world, there is not any that doth more deserve our diligent inquiry, meditation, discourse, and conference, than the Death and Passion of our Blessed Saviour.

And from hence it will appear how much they deserve to be blamed, who professing Christianity, and living in a Church where this Sacrament may be had, duly administred according to Christ's own Institution; (and such we are sure the Church of *England* to be) shall yet, either out of ignorance, faction, or prophaness, live in the continual neglect of it, as if the Table of the Lord were a contemptible thing, and this blessed Sacrament a needless matter, and lightly to be esteemed. Especially considering that this blessed Sacrament was ordained by Christ himself, for the continual remembrance of his Death, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.

For whose conviction and reformation these few lines were intended, whereunto if they prove effectual, I have my desire:

desire: However I have endeavoured to deliver my own soul.

The *Queries* are these following.

Quer. 1. *Whether the deliverance of mankind from the slavery of sin and Satan, Death and Hell, do not as well deserve to be kept in remembrance, as the deliverance of the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage? Or, which is in substance all one, Whether there be not as much or more reason for celebrating of the Lords-Supper, than there was of old for observing of the Passover?*

See *Exod. 12. 25, 26, 27.* their bondage was but a Type of our slavery under Satan; their deliverance a Type of ours; their Paschal Lamb a Type of our Jesus; the sprinkling of the blood of the Lamb secured them from the destroying Angel; the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus upon us will secure us from the wrath to come, for which we are bound to praise God for ever.

Surely if they had reason to keep their Passover, we have as much, if not more reason to observe the Lords-Supper, for a memorial that Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Qu. 2. Whether the celebrating of the Lords-Supper, be not as much under command now as ever the observing of the Passover was of old ?

God gave the Jews a special command about observing the Passover, insomuch that the Passover is called the ordinance of God ; yea, an Ordinance to them and their sons for ever ; *i.e.* as long as their State and Political Government did continue, *Exod. 12. 24.* We also have a command for the Lords-Supper, when our Saviour said, *Do this in remembrance of me* ; which words of command belong not only to Christ's Clergy, Disciples, but even to all ; for if some are bound to take, break, and bless, others must be bound to eat and drink, if some are bound to administer, others

others are bound to receive, or else what need of any administration? Nor doth this command shew only what may be done, but what must be done, and so make it not only a free-will offering, but a necessary duty, insomuch that to neglect it is the breach of a Commandment, and must needs be sinful before God.

Nay there are circumstances which will aggravate the sin; for this was instituted by a loving Master, by a dying Saviour, as his last words, Will and Testament in memorial of the greatest love that ever was shewn, and it was ordain-ed ~~to be~~ an Ordinance for ever: In doing ~~it~~ we shew forth the Lords death till he come; *i.e.* 'till he come again to Judgment. As long as we live here upon earth, we shall have need of frequent Communicating; when we come to Heaven, we shall have no need of any Sacrament, for we shall then enjoy the substance it self: but while we live here, Christ hath comply'd with our infirmity, and hath made it an Ordinance for ever

ever, even to the end of the World ; and therefore they must needs be the more sinful before God that shall totally neglect it.

Qu. 3. Whether the breach of this command do not as well deserve to be as severely punished, as the not keeping the Passover ?

Almighty God was so careful for every man to keep the Passover, that if he were not in a condition fit to keep it on the time appointed ; *scil.* the fourteenth day of the first Month, he was to keep it on the fourteenth day of the second Month ; and if having no lawful impediment he did not observe it, he was to be cut off from his people, and to bear his sin, *Numb. 9. 5, 11, 13. Exscindetur a populis suis,* i.e. *Hic & in futuro saeculo a sanctorum consortio excludetur :* So *Junius*, he shall be shut out from the Communion of Saints both here and hereafter.

Now where there is a parity of sin, there

there may well be feared a parity of judgment ; and he that thus excludes himself from the society of Gods people here, is not like to be numbered with the Saints hereafter.

Qu. 4. Whether there can be any better way for the commemoration of the death of Christ, than that which was instituted by Christ himself for that very purpose ?

In this we shew forth the Lords death, and Christ is set forth lively crucified ; neither is the bread and wine only a bare sign or representation of the body and blood of Christ thus crucified, and thus shed for us, but it is *signum exhibitiuum*, it is the Communion of the body and blood of Christ, *1 Cor. 10. 16.* i.e. the Communication ; for therein there is a real exhibition, a true tender and proffer of the body and blood of Christ unto every Communicant for the remission of our sins, and salvation of our souls, and this nothing can do but Christs own institution.

Cru-

Crucifixes, whether in picture, or in carving, either in wood or metal, are but the imperfect and dangerous inventions of men. Imperfect, for they may delineate one suffering upon a Cross, which may be as well one of the Thieves as **Christ**, and can represent but the suffering of the body, not of the soul ; and but of his Humanity, but cannot represent his Divinity ; nor can they represent the benefits of his Passion : And thus far they may be dangerous, that thereby men may be invited to superstition and Idolatry ; and at best, it is but the invention of man, and no way fit to come into competition with the command and institution of our Blessed Saviour ; & if we shall think that we can continue the remembrance of the Death of Christ as well by any other means as the Sacrament, I should think this were to disparage the Wisdom of Christ, and to make our selves wiser than him ; and how he will like of such doings, judg ye.

Qu. 5. *Whether the receiving of this
Blessed*

Blessed Sacrament be not the great badge of our Christian, Protestant profession, and witness of our Christianity, a discriminating of us from all false Religions, and evidencing to the world our dependance upon Christ for our remission, righteousness, peace, sanctification, resurrection and salvation ?

He that is baptized in the name of Christ in his infancy, may renounce it, and revolt from it when he comes of years: He that is a Jew, a Turk, yea a Papist, 'tis possible that such men may come into our publick Assemblies, we do not use to shut our doors, or to keep any out from hearing of the Gospel, or from being present at our prayers, unless they are Excommunicate; so that by all this outward appearance no man can certainly discover what we are; but if we conscientiously come to this Holy Table, and partake of this blessed Sacrament, even by so doing we do declare to the world, as much as outward actions can discover it, that we are

Chri-

Christians, that we are Protestants, and that we do depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ only, for pardon of our sins, and salvation of our souls: Insomuch that he who lives in the total neglect of this so necessary a duty may very well be thought to give the world too much occasion to think, that either he hath as yet his Religion to chuse, or that he is not willing the world should know what Religion he is of.

Qu. 6. *Whether the great neglect of this holy duty doth not justly deserve to have it altogether taken from us, and provoke God to send it to another people that shall be more thankful for it, and make a better use of it?*

The fountain of Goodness cannot endure to be laden at with unthankful hands; and this we must needs grant, that the vouchsafing of us the liberty of his Table, favours of extraordinary favour, and love inestimable: While we have this favour, the glory of God abideth

deth amongst us, and the Almighty Goodness is pleased in a special manner to communicate Himself unto us; and it must needs be a high priviledg for us sinful creatures to be admitted to be feasted with him at his Holy Table.

Now the greater mercy it is for God thus to condescend unto men, the greater must needs be the sin in the neglecting of it, and the greater comfort there may be had in this blessed Ordinance, the more are we enemies to our selves in the neglecting thereof; and we cannot but confess that God may justly take that from us which we so little care for, and which we so undervalue as totally to neglect it.

Is it not thus among men? who will continue favours to those that care not for them? to those that slight and neglect them? and 'tis but reasonable that God should leave us to our selves, and to our own inventions, that account his favours needless things, and shall undervalue so great salvation.

We are told of some guests that were

were invited to a great feast, and they took occasion to be out of the way, which was so displeasing to the great feast-maker, that he resolved that not one of them that were bidden should so much as taste of his Supper. And if God should deal so by us, and either take this blessed Ordinance quite from us, or suffer us to be cheated with an Idolatrous Mass in the stead thereof, we cannot accuse God of any injustice, but must needs acknowledg that he hath dealt with us but according to our deserts.

I must needs confess, that if God should give us up as a prey to those that hate both us, our Religion, and our Peace, which God in mercy prevent: I am very apt to think that the great neglect of this blessed Sacrament would be one of the chief reasons which would provoke God so to do.

Qu. 7. *Whether the presence of any unworthy Communicant can be a sufficient*

ent excuse for our neglecting of our duty?

Far be it from me to plead one word in the behalf of those that are in deed and in truth unworthy Communicants; and it were to be wisht, that Discipline were so vigilant, and put in such due execution, that those that are really unworthy, might be debar'd this holy Communion, 'till they had manifested an hearty sorrow for their past offences, and a serious resolution for the reforming of their ways; but if we will allow their presence to be a sufficient excuse for the omission of our duty, no man can have any comfort in his own Communicating, unless he could be assured that no hypocrite were present, which cannot be done but by Divine revelation.

Besides this, let me desire you to take notice of that passage, Job. 13. 10, 11. *Ye are clean, but not all, for he knew*

who should betray him; therefore said he, *Ye are not all clean.* Upon which words Saint *Augustine* doth thus descant: If the presence of *Judas* could have polluted the rest of the Apostles, Christ would have said, there are none of you clean, because there is one amongst you that doth defile you; and he would have stay'd till *Judas* had been gone out, and then he would have said, Now ye are clean, because he is gone that did defile you; but Christ saith while *Judas* was present, Now are ye clean, but not all, because there was one amongst them that was unclean. Whereby, saith he, it is manifest, that, *In eodem cætu hominum etiam Sacra menta sumentum, aliquorum immundiciem aliis obesse non posse:* As my worthiness cannot benefit another, so neither can his unworthiness be any hinderance to me, if I come rightly prepared. And this I am perswaded the rather to believe, because among the Guests which came

to

to the Wedding, he that came without a Wedding-garment, was the only man that was question'd for his unworthiness; it was not said to the rest, Why came ye along in this mans company? or there are none of you welcome because this man is in your company; but only, *Friend, how camest thou in hither?* Mat. 22. 12. And this I am sure is according to Saint Paul's Doctrine, 1 Cor. 11. 29. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not to another.* And therefore this can be no sufficient excuse.

Qu. 8. *Whether real unworthiness, i.e. whether living in Drunkenness, Adultery, Envy, Hatred, &c. can be sufficient to exempt us from the obligation to our duty?*

Now to this I answer, that none of these can exempt us from the obliga-

tion to our duty, the obligation is still upon us, for we are under a command; and whatever our condition be, the command is in force: But what then, must we come though we be unworthy? No, by no means, but we are bound to put away our unworthiness, that we may the better perform our duty.

I know it will be said, I fear I am not worthy; and if I come unworthily, I become guilty of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, and so eat and drink to my self damnation; and were it not better for me to forbear, than to come unworthily? Unto this I have many things to say.

First, Here's a fair shew and pretence of humility, and some pretended reverence to the Ordinance of God; but pretence of humility, may possibly prove one of the depths of Satan; this brought in of old the worshipping of

of Angels, *Col. 2. 18.* for in pretence of humility they would not make so bold as to make their addresses unto God immediately themselves, because they were such unworthy creatures, and therefore thought it fitter to make their approaches by the mediation of Angels; and what mischief this pretence of humility was like to have done Saint Peter, we may find, *Joh. 13. 8.* for had he had his desire at that present, it would have excluded him from having any part in the Lord Jesus.

Besides, thou fearest thou art unworthy; but let me ask, Is it thy fear that makes thee so to think? the more fearful any man is, the more careful he will be to avoid the danger; what makes any man fear? hath he examined himself? if not, it is his own fault; if he hath examined, and finds himself so to be, it is his greater fault if he doth not reform himself. Self-examination is

not to keep us from, but to fit us for the Sacrament. Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat, not stay away. And our Saviour hath taught us, when we come to offer our gift, and there remember that our brother hath ought against us, not to carry our gift away, but to leave it there, and to go first and be reconciled to our brother, and then come and offer the gift, *Mat. 5. 23, 24.*

If thou art not fit, thou maist be; Gods commands bring no men into snares: and therefore here it will be worthy to know what that is that makes us unworthy Communicants.

There is a twofold worthiness, the one is in strictness of justice, and so there is none so worthy but that he must confess with the Church, *We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crums that are under thy Table.* And there is a worthiness of acceptation, a meet-

a meetness and fitness to be partakers of these holy Mysteries, according to which we may every one say with *Hezekiah*, *The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his Fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the Sanctuary*, 2 Chron.30. 18, 19.

There is also a twofold unworthiness: The one of Infirmity: The other of an evil Conscience. That of Infirmity is what the best are liable unto, when by reason of our frailty we come not up to that height which is required of us: The other is of an evil Conscience, which is, when we know that we live in some sins that we are resolved not to part with, nor repent of; this alone is that unworthiness which will make us unworthy Communicants; and he that is thus unworthy is an enemy to his own Salvation, because he loves to go on in

wickedness, and how can that man expect the mercy of God ? And yet this unworthiness cannot exempt us from the obligation to our duty , neither doth God necessitate any man to do evil, for he requires us to Communicate, and shews us the way to do it worthily ; and that is, by repenting us truly of our sins , and stedfastly purposing to lead a new life. And this be sure of, he that fears to come unworthily for fear of damnation, that man will be as much afraid to stay away unworthily for fear of wilful disobedience against God.

We use to say, *Of two evils, chuse the least* ; but this holds true in penal only, not sinful evils ; for of sinful we are to chuse neither. Nor doth God ever bring men into such straits, but that he shews a way how to come out of them ; and therefore the case is not rightly stated, which is better, but which is worse ; for both of them are

are sinful before God ; and he that refuseth to receive upon this account, may as well refuse to hear the Word of God, lest it should become the favour of death unto death, in refusing to conform himself to the Directions thereof.

Qu. 9. *Whether he that lives in such an unworthiness, as makes him really to be an unworthy Communicant, be not also unfit to hear, pray, or die ? and he that is so, must needs be in a sad condition.*

To repent truly of our sins, to have a lively faith in Gods mercy through Christ, and to be in charity with all men, will make a man a meet Communicant ; and without this a man can neither be fit to pray, hear, nor die.

That

That we may hear as we ought, we must lay apart all filthiness, and receive the ingrafted word ; and we must believe, for it profits not if not mixt with faith in them that hear it ; and we must be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, or else it will never save our souls : and that Word requires that all our works be done in charity.

Would we pray ? how shall we call upon him in whom we have not believed ? and if we regard wickedness in our hearts , he will not hear us ; and how can we pray to God to forgive us our trespasses, unless we forgive them that trespass against us ? And if we die in impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience, how can we expect the Resurrection of the body unto life everlasting ? If we are fit for these, we are fit for the Sacrament : if we still neglect the Sacrament, we may as well

well be thought to neglect all the rest ; and he that lives in that neglect, he is not worthy the name of a Christian.

Qu. 10. And last, *Whether in all excuses that we make for our neglect, wilfulness be not the principal ingredient ? and if we are resolved to follow our own wills more than the will of God, how can our conversation be suitable to the Gospel ?*

In St. Luk. 14. 18. we find mention of a man that made a great Supper, and bad many, and they straitway began to make excuse ; they were but beginning, they never made a compleat excuse ; they began, but they never finished ; and indeed there's no end of making excuses ; but their excuses were in effect but denials ; and Saint Matthew saith in a like case, that when they

they were bid, they would not come,
Mat. 22. 3.

There's the truth of the matter, and so it will be interpreted another day. And the more wilful such neglect is, the more sinful it will be found before God.

For the close of all.

I will only add this one particular.

It is Christ alone that is the Consolation of *Israel*, neither is there salvation in any other; and there is none of us all, but when we come to die, we would be willing to pray with Saint Stephen, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*; but if our Consciences should then say unto us, You have often refused to receive Christ heretofore, and how can you now think he will receive you? You have often refused to receive Christ in the way of

of his own institution, and how can you expect he should receive you into everlasting habitations? would not this be a sad thought at your last departure?

Think on this.

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London, 1752.
London, 1752.

A

POSTSCRIPT

to the

Christian Reader.



THE great neglect of that Blessed Sacrament is so common amongst us, that it is, and ought to be just matter of a sad lamentation; this was the occasion of the first composing, and is now of the present publishing of this little paper; it is but a little one, and yet big enough through the blessing of God to convince the guilty. And as little as it is, it will one day be found to be a great witness against such as continue obstinate; and it will also witness for me, and of my aim and desire to do good.

Who am thine in the Lord Jesus,

R. S.

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